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(54) **METHODS FOR SUPPRESSING
ISOMERIZATION OF OLEFIN METATHESIS
PRODUCTS**

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CPC C07C 7/20; C07C 7/17; C07C 11/02;
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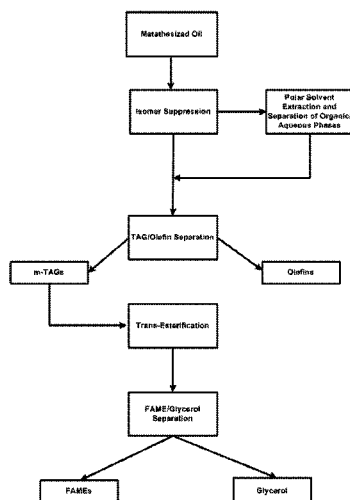
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A method for suppressing isomerization of an olefin metathesis product produced in a metathesis reaction includes adding an isomerization suppression agent that includes nitric acid to a mixture that includes the olefin metathesis product and residual metathesis catalyst from the metathesis reaction under conditions that are sufficient to passivate at least a portion of the residual metathesis catalyst. Methods of refining a natural oil are described.

17 Claims, 1 Drawing Sheet



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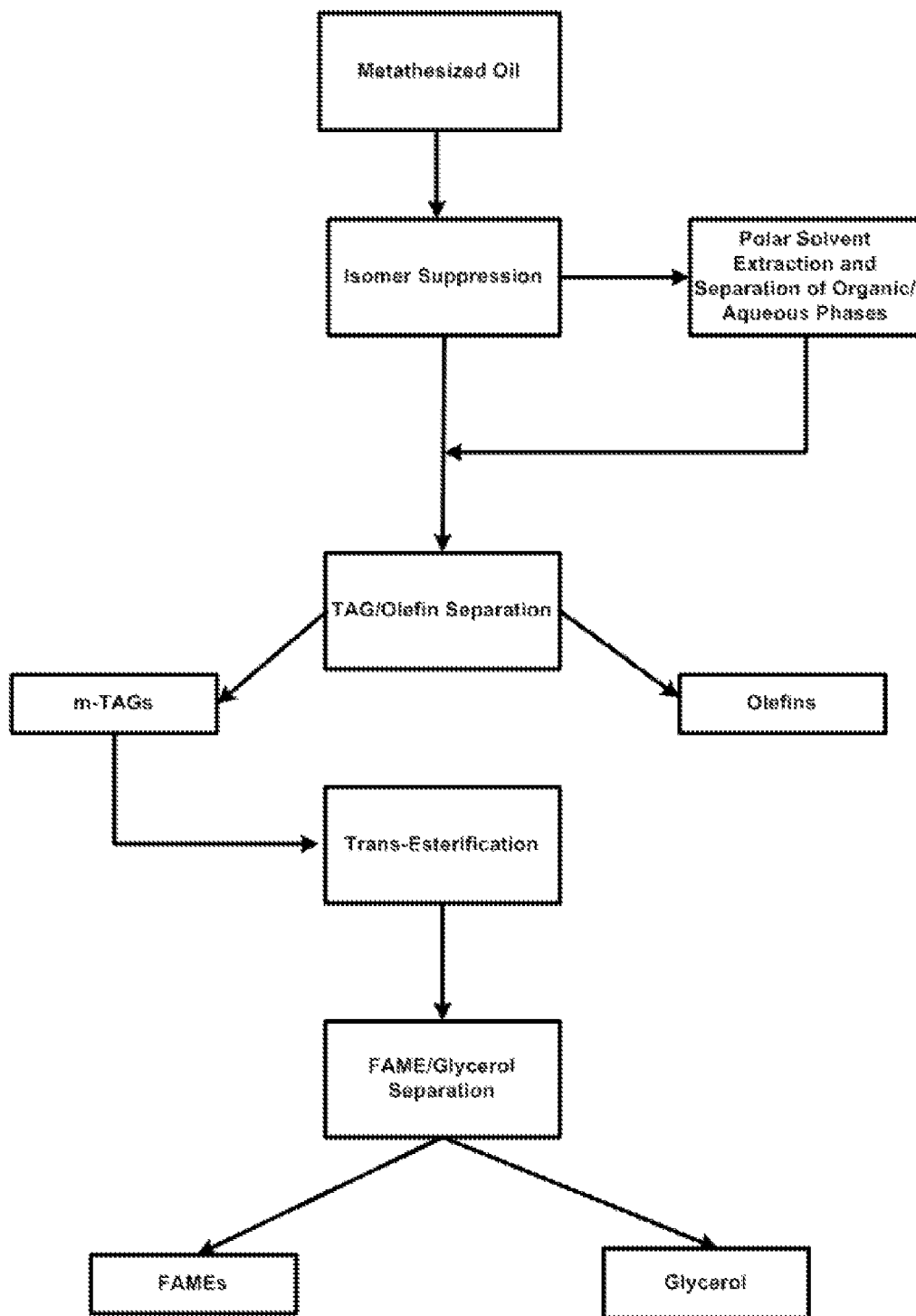
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METHODS FOR SUPPRESSING ISOMERIZATION OF OLEFIN METATHESIS PRODUCTS

FEDERALLY SPONSORED RESEARCH AND
DEVELOPMENT

This invention was made with government support under Contract No. DE-EE0002872 awarded by Department of Energy. The government has certain rights in the invention.

TECHNICAL FIELD

The present teachings relate generally to methods for suppressing the isomerization of olefins—particularly olefins produced in metathesis reactions.

BACKGROUND

The olefin metathesis reaction is a highly versatile and powerful technique for the synthetic preparation of alkenes. Transition metal carbene complexes—particularly those incorporating ruthenium—are popular catalysts for metathesis. However, the yield of certain desired metathesis products can be significantly reduced by double bond isomerization. This is typically the result of residual metathesis catalyst and/or its byproducts being present in the reaction mixture. This problem becomes particularly acute if the metathesis mixture is heated and/or distilled in the presence of residual catalyst.

In view of this problem, it is oftentimes necessary to remove residual metathesis catalyst from an olefinic metathesis product (or otherwise passivate the residual catalyst) prior to subjecting the olefinic metathesis product to further chemical reactions and/or processing. One approach, as described in U.S. Pat. No. 6,215,019 B1, has been to add tris(hydroxymethyl)phosphine (THMP) to the reaction mixture as an isomerization inhibitor. Unfortunately, the commercial availability and pricing of THMP are not viable on an industrial scale. Moreover, although THMP can be prepared from precursor salts, such as tetrakis(hydroxymethyl)phosphonium sulfate (THPS) or tetrakis(hydroxymethyl)phosphonium chloride (TKC), the conversion involves generation of formaldehyde—a known human carcinogen—as a byproduct. In addition, if pH is not strictly controlled during the formation of THMP (e.g., if conditions become too basic), explosive hydrogen gas has been known to form.

An isomerization suppression agent that efficiently passivates residual metathesis catalyst present in admixture with olefinic metathesis product, and which is readily available on a commercial scale but does not produce carcinogenic byproducts and/or involve the formation of explosive hydrogen gas is needed.

SUMMARY

The scope of the present invention is defined solely by the appended claims, and is not affected to any degree by the statements within this summary.

By way of introduction, a first method for suppressing isomerization of an olefin metathesis product produced in a metathesis reaction includes adding an isomerization suppression agent to a mixture that includes the olefin metathesis product and residual metathesis catalyst from the metathesis reaction under conditions that are sufficient to passivate at least a portion of the residual metathesis catalyst. The isomerization suppression agent comprises nitric acid.

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A second method for suppressing isomerization of an olefin metathesis product produced in a metathesis reaction includes: (a) adding an isomerization suppression agent to a mixture that includes the olefin metathesis product and residual metathesis catalyst from the metathesis reaction under conditions that are sufficient to passivate at least a portion of the residual metathesis catalyst; (b) washing the mixture with a polar solvent; and (c) separating a phase that includes a majority of the isomerization suppression agent from a phase that includes a majority of the olefin metathesis product. The isomerization suppression agent comprises nitric acid.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING

FIG. 1 is a process flow diagram depicting a representative scheme for isomerization suppression in an olefin metathesis product and shows an optional extraction, separation, and transesterification.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

A low-cost, effective methodology for suppressing the isomerization of olefin metathesis products—which is suitable for application on a large-scale, does not involve the generation of carcinogenic byproducts, such as formaldehyde, and is not susceptible to the generation of explosive gas, such as hydrogen—has been discovered and is described herein. In some embodiments, the inventive methodology facilitates preservation of the original location of a carbon-carbon double bond created during a metathesis reaction, thereby facilitating subsequent processing of metathesized product and preserving product integrity. Surprisingly and unexpectedly, in some embodiments, the inventive methodology utilizes nitric acid as an isomerization suppression agent—in spite of the conventional wisdom that has traditionally regarded acids—particularly strong mineral acids, such as nitric acid—as being promoters and/or catalysts of olefin isomerization.

DEFINITIONS

Throughout this description and in the appended claims, the following definitions are to be understood:

The term “olefin” refers to a hydrocarbon compound containing at least one carbon-carbon double bond. As used herein, the term “olefin” encompasses hydrocarbons having more than one carbon-carbon double bond (e.g., di-olefins, tri-olefins, etc.). In some embodiments, the term “olefin” refers to a group of carbon-carbon double bond-containing compounds with different chain lengths. In some embodiments, the term “olefin” refers to polyolefins, straight, branched, and/or cyclic olefins.

The term “suppressing” as used in reference to the isomerization of an olefin refers to an inhibitory effect on an olefin’s susceptibility towards isomerization under a given set of conditions. It is to be understood that the term “suppressing” encompasses but does not necessarily imply 100% suppression (i.e., 0% isomerization).

The term “isomerization” as used in reference to an olefin metathesis product refers to the migration of a carbon-carbon double bond in the product to another location within the molecule (e.g., from a terminal position to an internal position and/or from an internal position to a terminal position and/or from a first internal position to a second internal position and/or from a first terminal position to a second terminal position, etc.).

The phrase “olefin metathesis product” refers to any product produced in a metathesis reaction that contains at least one carbon-carbon double bond. In some embodiments, the “olefin metathesis product” is an unfunctionalized hydrocarbon compound. In some embodiments, the phrase “olefin metathesis product” subsumes the term “olefin.” In some embodiments, the “olefin metathesis product” is functionalized and contains one or a plurality of additional functional groups in addition to its at least one carbon-carbon double bond.

The term “functionalized” and the phrase “functional group” refer to the presence in a molecule of one or more heteroatoms at a terminal and/or an internal position, wherein the one or more heteroatoms is an atom other than carbon and hydrogen. In some embodiments, the heteroatom constitutes one atom of a polyatomic functional group with representative functional groups including but not limited to carboxylic acids, carboxylic esters, ketones, aldehydes, anhydrides, ether groups, cyano groups, nitro groups, sulfur-containing groups, phosphorous-containing groups, amides, imides, N-containing heterocycles, aromatic N-containing heterocycles, salts thereof, and the like, and combinations thereof.

The phrase “metathesis reaction” refers to a chemical reaction involving a single type of olefin or a plurality of different types of olefin, which is conducted in the presence of a metathesis catalyst, and which results in the formation of at least one new olefin product. The phrase “metathesis reaction” encompasses self-metathesis, cross-metathesis (aka co-metathesis; CM), ring-opening metathesis (ROM), ring-opening metathesis polymerizations (ROMP), ring-closing metathesis (RCM), acyclic diene metathesis (ADMET), and the like, and combinations thereof. In some embodiments, the phrase “metathesis reaction” refers to a chemical reaction involving a natural oil feedstock.

The phrases “natural oil,” “natural oil feedstock,” and the like refer to oils derived from plant or animal sources. As used herein, these phrases encompass natural oil derivatives as well, unless otherwise indicated.

The term “derivative” as used in reference to a substrate (e.g., a “functionalized derivative” of a carboxylic acid, such as 9-decenoic acid, etc.) refers to compounds and/or mixture of compounds derived from the substrate by any one or combination of methods known in the art, including but not limited to saponification, transesterification, esterification, amidification, amination, imide preparation, hydrogenation (partial or full), isomerization, oxidation, reduction, and the like, and combinations thereof.

The phrase “natural oil derivatives” refers to compounds and/or mixture of compounds derived from a natural oil using any one or combination of methods known in the art, including but not limited to saponification, transesterification, esterification, amidification, amination, hydrogenation (partial or full), isomerization, oxidation, reduction, and the like, and combinations thereof.

The phrase “low-molecular-weight olefin” refers to any straight, branched or cyclic olefin in the C_2 to C_{30} range and/or any combination of such olefins. The phrase “low-molecular-weight olefin” encompasses polyolefins including but not limited to dienes, trienes, and the like. In some embodiments, the low-molecular-weight olefin is functionalized.

The term “ester” refers to compounds having a general formula $R-COO-R'$, wherein R and R' denote any substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or aryl group. In some embodiments, the term “ester” refers to a group of compounds having a general formula as described above, wherein the compounds have different chain lengths.

The phrase “residual metathesis catalyst” refers to a catalytic material left over from a metathesis reaction that is capable of participating in, catalyzing and/or otherwise promoting or facilitating the isomerization of a carbon-carbon double bond although it may or may not still be capable of catalyzing a metathesis reaction. As used herein, the phrase “residual metathesis catalyst” encompasses wholly unreacted metathesis catalyst, partially reacted metathesis catalyst, and all manner of chemical entities derived from a metathesis catalyst over the course of a metathesis reaction, including but not limited to all manner of active or inactive intermediates (e.g., carbenes, metallocycles, etc.), degradation and/or decomposition products (e.g., metal hydrides, ligand fragments, etc.), metals, metal salts, metal complexes, and the like, and combinations thereof.

The term “passivate” as used in reference to residual metathesis catalyst refers to any reduction in the activity of the residual metathesis catalyst vis-à-vis its ability and/or tendency to catalyze and/or otherwise participate in (e.g., via a stoichiometric chemical reaction, sequestration or the like) the isomerization of a carbon-carbon double bond. It is to be understood that the term “passivate” encompasses but does not necessarily imply complete deactivation of residual metathesis catalyst towards isomerization of a carbon-carbon double bond.

The phrase “conditions sufficient to passivate” as used in reference to the conditions under which an isomerization suppression agent is added to a mixture comprising olefin metathesis product and residual metathesis catalyst refers to a variable combination of experimental parameters, which together result in the passivation of at least a portion of residual metathesis catalyst. The selection of these individual parameters lies well within the skill of the ordinary artisan in view of the guiding principles outlined herein, and will vary according to the target reduction in degree of isomerization that is being sought for a particular application. As used herein, the phrase “conditions sufficient to passivate” encompasses experimental parameters including but not limited to concentrations of reagents, the type of mixing and/or stirring provided (e.g., high-shear, low-intensity, etc.), reaction temperature, residence time, reaction pressure, reaction atmosphere (e.g., exposure to atmosphere vs. an inert gas, etc.), and the like, and combinations thereof.

The phrase “degree of isomerization” as used in relation to an olefin metathesis product refers to an amount to which a carbon-carbon double bond in the olefin metathesis product undergoes migration from its original position to a subsequent position (e.g., the degree to which an initially formed olefin metathesis product is converted into one or more non-identical isomers thereof). In some embodiments, the “degree of isomerization” refers to the degree to which an initially formed α -olefin metathesis product is converted into one or more internal isomers thereof under a given set of conditions (e.g., the amount of terminal-to-internal migration). In some embodiments, the “degree of isomerization” refers to the degree to which an olefin metathesis product containing an internal carbon-carbon double bond is converted into an α -olefin under a given set of conditions (e.g., the amount of internal-to-terminal migration). In some embodiments, the “degree of isomerization” refers to the degree to which an olefin metathesis product containing an internal carbon-carbon double bond is converted into one or more additional and non-identical internal isomers thereof under a given set of conditions (e.g., the amount of internal-to-internal migration). In some embodiments, the “degree of isomerization” refers to the degree to which an initially formed α -olefin metathesis product is converted into a different α -olefin under

a given set of conditions (e.g., the amount of terminal-to-terminal migration). In some embodiments, the “degree of isomerization” refers to any combination of the amount of terminal-to-terminal migration, the amount of internal-to-terminal migration, the amount of internal-to-terminal migration, and/or the amount of terminal-to-terminal migration.

The term “attached” as used in reference to a solid support and an isomerization suppression agent is to be understood broadly and without limitation to encompass a range of associative-type forces, including but not limited to covalent bonds, ionic bonds, physical and/or electrostatic attractive forces (e.g., hydrogen bonds, Van der Waals forces, etc.), and the like, and combinations thereof.

By way of general background, as mentioned above, the presence of residual metathesis catalyst during heating and/or distillation of an olefin metathesis product can result in the isomerization of a carbon-carbon double bond in the product, such that one or more isomers of the original olefin metathesis product are formed. Such isomerization is generally undesirable when end-group functionalization within the product molecule is the goal. In addition, such isomerization is generally undesirable when it leads to a mixture of products and the goal is a well-defined product in high yield and in high purity. Labile olefins and/or olefins that are not as thermodynamically stable as other isomers readily accessible through isomerization are particularly—though by no means exclusively—susceptible to isomerization (e.g., terminal olefins, vinyl olefins, vinylidene olefins, and the like).

By way of example, although methyl 9-decenoate is an expected product of the cross-metathesis between methyl oleate and the α -olefin 1-butene, it is found in practice that some isomerization of the 9-substituted olefin to one or more internal olefins (e.g., migration of the double bond to the 7- and/or 8-positions) can occur when the cross metathesis product is heated prior to removal and/or pacification of residual metathesis catalyst. To assess the magnitude of the isomerization, the cross-metathesized material obtained from the cross-metathesis between methyl oleate and 1-butene was subjected to typical oil refining conditions, such as exposure to high temperatures (e.g., about 250° C.). In the absence of any isomerization suppression agent, the degree of isomerization of methyl 9-decenoate to internal isomers under typical conditions was observed to be about 25%. It is to be understood, however, that this degree of isomerization is meant solely to be illustrative and that it can vary depending on the particular substrate and conditions.

However, by adding nitric acid as an isomerization suppression agent—particularly though not exclusively in excess molar amounts relative to residual metathesis catalyst—the present inventors found that the degree of isomerization can be greatly reduced. Moreover, nitric acid is available in commercial quantities and is not subject to the same carcinogenicity and hydrogen formation concerns that are associated with THMP production.

It is to be understood that elements and features of the various representative embodiments described below may be combined in different ways to produce new embodiments that likewise fall within the scope of the present teachings.

By way of general introduction, in some embodiments, a method in accordance with the present teachings for suppressing isomerization of an olefin metathesis product produced in a metathesis reaction comprises adding an isomerization suppression agent to a mixture that comprises the olefin metathesis product and residual metathesis catalyst from the metathesis reaction. The isomerization suppression

agent is added under conditions sufficient to passivate at least a portion of the residual metathesis catalyst, and comprises nitric acid.

After the isomerization suppression agent has been added to the mixture comprising the olefin metathesis product and residual metathesis catalyst, the isomerization suppression agent can be left in the mixture and carried along, either in whole or in part, in a subsequent chemical reaction or processing step. Alternatively, the isomerization suppression agent can be separated and removed from the mixture, either partially or completely, prior to any subsequent reaction or processing step.

For embodiments in which it is desirable to separate and/or remove isomerization suppression agent following passivation of residual metathesis catalyst, a method in accordance with the present teachings can optionally further comprise washing or extracting the metathesis reaction mixture with a polar solvent. In some embodiments, the polar solvent is at least partially non-miscible with the mixture, such that a separation of layers can occur. In some embodiments, at least a portion of the isomerization suppression agent is partitioned into the polar solvent layer, which can then be separated from the non-miscible remaining layer and removed. Representative polar solvents for use in accordance with the present teachings include but are not limited to water, alcohols (e.g., methanol, ethanol, etc.), ethylene glycol, glycerol, DMF, multifunctional polar compounds including but not limited to polyethylene glycols and/or glymes, and the like, and combinations thereof. In some embodiments, the mixture is extracted with water.

In addition to or as an alternative to washing the mixture with a polar solvent to remove isomerization suppression agent, a method in accordance with the present teachings can optionally further comprise removing at least a portion of the isomerization suppression agent by adsorbing it onto an adsorbent, which optionally can then be physically separated from the mixture (e.g., via filtration or the like). In some embodiments, the adsorbent is polar. Representative adsorbents for use in accordance with the present teachings include but are not limited to carbon, silica, silica-alumina, alumina, clay, magnesium silicates (e.g., Magnesols), the synthetic silica adsorbent sold under the tradename TRISYL by W. R. Grace & Co., diatomaceous earth, and the like, and combinations thereof.

In some embodiments, the olefin metathesis product comprises at least one terminal double bond and, in some embodiments, the isomerization comprises conversion of the terminal double bond to an internal double bond. In some embodiments, the olefin metathesis product comprises at least one internal double bond and, in some embodiments, the isomerization comprises conversion of the internal double bond to a different internal double bond (i.e., an internal double bond between two carbon atoms at least one of which was not part of the original internal double bond). In some embodiments, the olefin metathesis product comprises at least one internal double bond and, in some embodiments, the isomerization comprises conversion of the internal double bond to a terminal double bond. In some embodiments, the suppressing of the isomerization comprises an observed degree of isomerization that is less than about 5%, in some embodiments less than about 4%, in some embodiments less than about 3%, in some embodiments less than about 2%, in some embodiments less than about 1%, in some embodiments less than about 0.9%, in some embodiments less than about 0.8%, in some embodiments less than about 0.7%, in some embodiments less than about 0.6%, in some embodiments less than about 0.5%, in some embodiments less than about

0.4%, in some embodiments less than about 0.3%, in some embodiments less than about 0.2%, and in some embodiments less than about 0.1%.

In some embodiments, the olefin metathesis product is α,ω -di-functionalized. In some embodiments, the olefin metathesis product comprises a carboxylic acid moiety. In some embodiments, the olefin metathesis product comprises a terminal olefin and a carboxylic acid moiety. In some embodiments, the olefin metathesis product comprises an internal olefin and a carboxylic acid moiety. In some embodiments, the olefin metathesis product comprises a carboxylic ester moiety. In some embodiments, the olefin metathesis product comprises a terminal olefin and a carboxylic ester moiety. In some embodiments, the olefin metathesis product comprises an internal olefin and a carboxylic ester moiety. In some embodiments, the olefin metathesis product is selected from the group consisting of 9-decenoic acid, an ester of 9-decenoic acid, 9-undecenoic acid, an ester of 9-undecenoic acid, 9-dodecenoic acid, an ester of 9-dodecenoic acid, 1-decene, 2-dodecene, 3-dodecene, and combinations thereof. In some embodiments, the esters of 9-decenoic acid, 9-undecenoic acid, and 9-dodecenoic acid are alkyl esters, and, in some embodiments, methyl esters (e.g., methyl 9-decenoate, methyl 9-undecenoate, methyl 9-dodecenoate, etc.).

In some embodiments, the olefin metathesis product is derived from a natural oil reactant. In some embodiments, the metathesis reaction that produced the olefin metathesis product comprises self-metathesis of a natural oil and/or a derivative thereof. In some embodiments, the metathesis reaction that produced the olefin metathesis product comprises cross-metathesis between a natural oil and/or a derivative thereof and a low molecular weight olefin.

Representative examples of natural oils for use in accordance with the present teachings include but are not limited to vegetable oils, algal oils, animal fats, tall oils (e.g., by-products of wood pulp manufacture), derivatives of these oils, and the like, and combinations thereof. Representative examples of vegetable oils for use in accordance with the present teachings include but are not limited to canola oil, rapeseed oil, coconut oil, corn oil, cottonseed oil, olive oil, palm oil, peanut oil, safflower oil, sesame oil, soybean oil, sunflower oil, linseed oil, palm kernel oil, tung oil, jatropha oil, mustard oil, pennycress oil, camelina oil, hemp oil, castor oil, and the like, and combinations thereof. Representative examples of animal fats for use in accordance with the present teachings include but are not limited to lard, tallow, poultry fat, yellow grease, brown grease, fish oil, and the like, and combinations thereof. In some embodiments, the natural oil may be refined, bleached, and/or deodorized.

Representative examples of natural oil derivatives for use in accordance with the present teachings include but are not limited to gums, phospholipids, soapstock, acidulated soapstock, distillate or distillate sludge, fatty acids, fatty acid alkyl esters (e.g., non-limiting examples such as 2-ethylhexyl ester, etc.), hydroxy-substituted variations thereof, and the like, and combinations thereof. In some embodiments, the natural oil derivative is a fatty acid methyl ester (FAME) derived from the glyceride of the natural oil.

In some embodiments, the low-molecular-weight olefin is an " α -olefin" (aka "terminal olefin") in which the unsaturated carbon-carbon bond is present at one end of the compound. In some embodiments, the low-molecular-weight olefin is an internal olefin. In some embodiments, the low-molecular-weight olefin is functionalized. In some embodiments, the low-molecular weight olefin is a C_2 - C_{30} olefin. In some embodiments, the low-molecular weight olefin is a C_2 - C_{30} α -olefin. In some embodiments, the low-molecular weight

olefin is a C_2 - C_{25} olefin. In some embodiments, the low-molecular weight olefin is a C_2 - C_{25} α -olefin. In some embodiments, the low-molecular weight olefin is a C_2 - C_{20} olefin. In some embodiments, the low-molecular weight olefin is a C_2 - C_{20} α -olefin. In some embodiments, the low-molecular weight olefin is a C_2 - C_{15} olefin. In some embodiments, the low-molecular weight olefin is a C_2 - C_{15} α -olefin. In some embodiments, the low-molecular weight olefin is a C_2 - C_{10} olefin. In some embodiments, the low-molecular weight olefin is a C_2 - C_{10} α -olefin. In some embodiments, the low-molecular weight olefin is a C_2 - C_8 olefin. In some embodiments, the low-molecular weight olefin is a C_2 - C_8 α -olefin. In some embodiments, the low-molecular weight olefin is a C_2 - C_6 olefin. In some embodiments, the low-molecular weight olefin is a C_2 - C_6 α -olefin. Representative low-molecular-weight olefins in the C_2 to C_6 range include but are not limited to ethylene, propylene, 1-butene, 2-butene, isobutene, 1-pentene, 2-pentene, 3-pentene, 2-methyl-1-butene, 2-methyl-2-butene, 3-methyl-1-butene, cyclopentene, 1-hexene, 2-hexene, 3-hexene, 4-hexene, 2-methyl-1-pentene, 3-methyl-1-pentene, 4-methyl-1-pentene, 2-methyl-2-pentene, 3-methyl-2-pentene, 4-methyl-2-pentene, 2-methyl-3-pentene, 1-hexene, 2-hexene, 3-hexene, cyclohexene, and the like, and combinations thereof. In some embodiments, the low-molecular-weight olefin is an α -olefin selected from the group consisting of styrene, vinyl cyclohexane, and a combination thereof. In some embodiments, the low-molecular weight olefin is a mixture of linear and/or branched olefins in the C_4 - C_{10} range. In some embodiments, the low-molecular weight olefin is a mixture of linear and/or branched C_4 olefins (e.g., combinations of 1-butene, 2-butene, and/or iso-butene). In some embodiments, the low-molecular weight olefin is a mixture of linear and/or branched olefins in the higher C_{11} - C_{14} range.

In some embodiments, the olefin metathesis product comprises at least one internal double bond, which in some embodiments is cis and in some embodiments is trans. In some embodiments, the olefin metathesis product comprises at least one terminal double bond and at least one internal double bond. In some embodiments, the olefin metathesis product comprises at least one terminal double bond and/or at least one internal double bond, and at least one additional functional group. In some embodiments, the at least one additional functional group is selected from the group consisting of carboxylic acids, carboxylic esters, mono-acylglycerides (MAGs), di-acylglycerides (DAGs), tri-acylglycerides (TAGs), and combinations thereof. In some embodiments, the olefin metathesis product is produced in a self-metathesis reaction. In some embodiments, the olefin metathesis product is produced in a cross-metathesis reaction. In some embodiments, the olefin metathesis product is a downstream derivative of a self-metathesis or cross-metathesis product (including but not limited to, for example, transesterification products, hydrolysis products, and the like, and combinations thereof). In some embodiments, the olefin metathesis product is produced in a metathesis reaction involving one or more previously formed olefin metathesis products (e.g., the production of 9-ODDAME from the cross-metathesis of 9-DAME and 9-DDAME—one or both of which is itself a product of a metathesis reaction).

In some embodiments, the metathesis reaction that produced the olefin metathesis product comprises the reaction of two triglycerides present in a natural feedstock in the presence of a metathesis catalyst (self-metathesis), wherein each triglyceride comprises at least one carbon-carbon double bond, thereby forming a new mixture of olefins and esters that in some embodiments comprises a triglyceride dimer. In

some embodiments, the triglyceride dimer comprises more than one carbon-carbon double bond, such that higher oligomers also can form. In some embodiments, the metathesis reaction that produced the olefin metathesis product comprises the reaction of an olefin (e.g., a low-molecular weight olefin) and a triglyceride in a natural feedstock that comprises at least one carbon-carbon double bond, thereby forming new olefinic molecules as well as new ester molecules (cross-metathesis).

In some embodiments, the residual metathesis catalyst comprises a transition metal. In some embodiments, the residual metathesis catalyst comprises ruthenium. In some embodiments, the residual metathesis catalyst comprises rhodium. In some embodiments, the residual metathesis catalyst comprises tantalum. In some embodiments, the residual metathesis catalyst comprises nickel. In some embodiments, the residual metathesis catalyst comprises tungsten. In some embodiments, the residual metathesis catalyst comprises molybdenum.

In some embodiments, the residual metathesis catalyst comprises a ruthenium carbene complex and/or an entity derived from such a complex. In some embodiments, the residual metathesis catalyst comprises a material selected from the group consisting of a ruthenium vinylidene complex, a ruthenium alkylidene complex, a ruthenium methylydene complex, a ruthenium benzylidene complex, and combinations thereof, and/or an entity derived from any such complex or combination of such complexes. In some embodiments, the residual metathesis catalyst comprises a ruthenium carbene complex comprising at least one tricyclohexylphosphine ligand and/or an entity derived from such a complex. In some embodiments, the residual metathesis catalyst comprises a ruthenium carbene complex comprising at least two tricyclohexylphosphine ligands [e.g., $(PCy_3)_2Cl_2Ru=CH-CH=C(CH_3)_2$, etc.] and/or an entity derived from such a complex. In some embodiments, the residual metathesis catalyst comprises a ruthenium carbene complex comprising an isopropoxy group attached to a benzene ring and/or an entity derived from such a complex.

In some embodiments, the residual metathesis catalyst comprises a Grubbs-type olefin metathesis catalyst and/or an entity derived therefrom. In some embodiments, the residual metathesis catalyst comprises a first-generation Grubbs-type olefin metathesis catalyst and/or an entity derived therefrom. In some embodiments, the residual metathesis catalyst comprises a second-generation Grubbs-type olefin metathesis catalyst and/or an entity derived therefrom. In some embodiments, the residual metathesis catalyst comprises a first-generation Hoveyda-Grubbs-type olefin metathesis catalyst and/or an entity derived therefrom. In some embodiments, the residual metathesis catalyst comprises a second-generation Hoveyda-Grubbs-type olefin metathesis catalyst and/or an entity derived therefrom. In some embodiments, the residual metathesis catalyst comprises one or a plurality of the ruthenium carbene metathesis catalysts sold by Materia, Inc. of Pasadena, Calif. and/or one or more entities derived from such catalysts. Representative metathesis catalysts from Materia, Inc. for use in accordance with the present teachings include but are not limited to those sold under the following product numbers as well as combinations thereof: product no. C823 (CAS no. 172222-30-9), product no. C848 (CAS no. 246047-72-3), product no. C601 (CAS no. 203714-71-0), product no. C627 (CAS no. 301224-40-8), product no. C571 (CAS no. 927429-61-6), product no. C598 (CAS no. 802912-

44-3), product no. C793 (CAS no. 927429-60-5), product no. C801 (CAS no. 194659-03-9), product no. C827 (CAS no. 253688-91-4), product no. C884 (CAS no. 900169-53-1), product no. C833 (CAS no. 1020085-61-3), product no. C859 (CAS no. 832146-68-6), product no. C711 (CAS no. 635679-24-2), product no. C933 (CAS no. 373640-75-6).

In some embodiments, the isomerization suppression agent comprises nitric acid. It is to be understood that the concentration, origin, purity, physical state, amount of dissolved NO_2 , color, and the like of the nitric acid used in accordance with the present teachings is wholly unrestricted, and that all manner of nitric acid is contemplated for use in accordance with these teachings.

In some embodiments, the isomerization suppression agent comprises anhydrous nitric acid [e.g., about 100 wt % HNO_3 (about 24 M)]. In some embodiments, the isomerization suppression agent comprises fuming nitric acid which, in some embodiments, is selected from the group consisting of strong nitric acid, white fuming nitric acid, red fuming nitric acid, and combinations thereof. In some embodiments, the isomerization suppression agent comprises concentrated nitric acid [e.g., about 68 to about 70 wt % HNO_3 (about 15 to about 16 M)], which, in some embodiments, is selected from the group consisting of technical grade concentrated nitric acid, reagent grade concentrated nitric acid, and a combination thereof. In some embodiments, the isomerization suppression agent comprises mono- or poly-hydrated nitric acid which, in some embodiments, comprises a solid hydrate of nitric acid (e.g. $HNO_3 \cdot H_2O$, $HNO_3 \cdot 3H_2O$, etc.). In some embodiments, the isomerization suppression agent comprises a solution of nitric acid. In some embodiments, the solution is aqueous.

In some embodiments, the isomerization suppression agent comprises an aqueous solution of nitric acid in a concentration of between about 0.01 wt % and about 99 wt %. In some embodiments, the concentration is between about 0.1 wt % and about 98 wt %. In some embodiments, the concentration is between about 0.5 wt % and about 90 wt %. In some embodiments, the concentration is between about 1 wt % and about 80 wt %. In some embodiments, the concentration is between about 2 wt % and about 75 wt %. In some embodiments, the concentration is between about 3 wt % and about 70 wt %. In some embodiments, the concentration is between about 4 wt % and about 60 wt %. In some embodiments, the concentration is between about 5 wt % and about 50 wt %. In some embodiments, the concentration is between about 6 wt % and about 40 wt %.

In some embodiments, the isomerization suppression agent comprises nitric acid and is attached to a solid support (e.g., silica gel). In some embodiments, the solid support comprises one or more polar functional groups. Representative solid supports for use in accordance with the present teachings include but are not limited to carbon, silica, silica-alumina, alumina, clay, magnesium silicates (e.g., Magnesols), the synthetic silica adsorbent sold under the tradename TRISYL by W. R. Grace & Co., diatomaceous earth, and the like, and combinations thereof.

In some embodiments, the isomerization suppression agent is added to a mixture in accordance with the present teachings in a molar equivalent relative to the residual metathesis catalyst. In some embodiments, the isomerization suppression agent is added to a mixture in accordance with the present teachings in a molar excess relative to the residual metathesis catalyst. In some embodiments, the molar excess is less than or equal to about 2 to 1. In some embodiments, the molar excess is less than or equal to about 3 to 1. In some embodiments, the molar excess is less than or equal to about

4 to 1. In some embodiments, the molar excess is less than or equal to about 5 to 1. In some embodiments, the molar excess is less than or equal to about 10 to 1. In some embodiments, the molar excess is less than or equal to about 15 to 1. In some embodiments, the molar excess is less than or equal to about 20 to 1. In some embodiments, the molar excess is less than or equal to about 25 to 1. In some embodiments, the molar excess is less than or equal to about 30 to 1. In some embodiments, the molar excess is less than or equal to about 35 to 1. In some embodiments, the molar excess is less than or equal to about 40 to 1. In some embodiments, the molar excess is less than or equal to about 45 to 1. In some embodiments, the molar excess is less than or equal to about 50 to 1. In some embodiments, the molar excess is less than or equal to about 55 to 1. In some embodiments, the molar excess is less than or equal to about 60 to 1. In some embodiments, the molar excess is less than or equal to about 65 to 1. In some embodiments, the molar excess is less than or equal to about 70 to 1. In some embodiments, the molar excess is less than or equal to about 75 to 1. In some embodiments, the molar excess is less than or equal to about 80 to 1. In some embodiments, the molar excess is less than or equal to about 85 to 1. In some embodiments, the molar excess is less than or equal to about 90 to 1. In some embodiments, the molar excess is less than or equal to about 95 to 1. In some embodiments, the molar excess is less than or equal to about 100 to 1.

In some embodiments, the conditions under which an isomerization suppression agent in accordance with the present teachings is added to a mixture that comprises an olefin metathesis product and residual metathesis catalyst comprise mixing. In some embodiments, the mixing comprises high shear mixing (e.g., mixing of a type sufficient to disperse and/or transport at least a portion of a first phase and/or chemical species into a second phase with which the first phase and/or a chemical species would normally be at least partly immiscible).

In some embodiments, the conditions under which an isomerization suppression agent in accordance with the present teachings is added to a mixture that comprises an olefin metathesis product and residual metathesis catalyst comprise heating. The present teachings are in no way restricted to any particular heating temperature or range of temperatures. However, for purposes of illustration, in some embodiments, the heating comprises a temperature of about 40° C. or higher. In some embodiments, the heating comprises a temperature of about 50° C. or higher. In some embodiments, the heating comprises a temperature of about 60° C. or higher. In some embodiments, the heating comprises a temperature of about 70° C. or higher. In some embodiments, the heating comprises a temperature of about 80° C. or higher. In some embodiments, the heating comprises a temperature of about 90° C. or higher.

The present teachings are in no way restricted to any particular duration of residence time. However, for purposes of illustration, in some embodiments, the conditions under which an isomerization suppression agent in accordance with the present teachings is added to a mixture that comprises an olefin metathesis product and residual metathesis catalyst comprise a residence time of less than about 60 minutes. In some embodiments, the residence time is less than about 55 minutes. In some embodiments, the residence time is less than about 50 minutes. In some embodiments, the residence time is less than about 45 minutes. In some embodiments, the residence time is less than about 40 minutes. In some embodiments, the residence time is less than about 35 minutes. In some embodiments, the residence time is less than about 30 minutes. In some embodiments, the residence time is less

than about 25 minutes. In some embodiments, the residence time is less than about 20 minutes. In some embodiments, the residence time is less than about 15 minutes. In some embodiments, the residence time is less than about 10 minutes. In some embodiments, the residence time is less than about 5 minutes.

While neither desiring to be bound by any particular theory nor intending to limit in any measure the scope of the appended claims or their equivalents, it is presently believed that in some embodiments, the passivation of residual metathesis catalyst with nitric acid proceeds rapidly, such that in some embodiments, a residence time of less than about 10 minutes, and in some embodiments less than about 2 minutes, is sufficient to achieve an acceptable degree of isomerization suppression.

As presently contemplated, the addition of an isomerization suppression agent to a mixture that comprises an olefin metathesis product and residual metathesis catalyst in accordance with the present teachings can be practiced whenever it is desirable to prevent isomerization of an olefin metathesis product—particularly though not exclusively potentially labile olefin products, such as terminal olefins—during any subsequent handling and/or processing including but not limited to heating, distillation, photolytic exposure, exposure to oxidants, and the like, and combinations thereof.

In some embodiments, methods for suppressing isomerization of an olefin metathesis product in accordance with the present teachings can be used in combination with metathesis-based methods for refining natural oil feedstocks. Representative metathesis-based methods for refining natural oil feedstocks include but are not limited to those described in United States Patent Application Publication No. 2011/0113679 A1, assigned to the assignee of the present invention.

By way of non-limiting example, in reference to FIG. 1 of United States Patent Application Publication No. 2011/0113679 A1, methods for suppressing isomerization of an olefin metathesis product in accordance with the present teachings can be implemented prior to introducing the metathesized product **22** to the separation unit **30** (e.g., a distillation column) and/or at one or more additional stages in the process. By way of further non-limiting example, in reference to FIG. 2 of United States Patent Application Publication No. 2011/0113679 A1, methods for suppressing isomerization of an olefin metathesis product in accordance with the present teachings can be implemented prior to introducing the metathesized product **122** to the separation unit **130** and/or the hydrogenation unit **125** and/or at one or more additional stages in the process.

In some embodiments, as shown in FIG. 1, methods for suppressing isomerization of an olefin metathesis product in accordance with the present teachings further comprise a polar solvent wash—in other words, extracting the mixture to which an isomerization suppression agent has been added with a polar solvent (e.g., water). In some embodiments, the metathesis mixture (e.g., a neat mixture that comprises, in some embodiments, natural oil, residual metathesis catalyst, olefin metathesis product and, optionally, low-molecular-weight olefin) is substantially immiscible with the polar solvent, such that two layers are formed. For the sake of convenience, these immiscible layers are described herein as being “aqueous” and “organic” although, in some embodiments, the so-called aqueous layer may be comprised of a polar solvent other than or in addition to water. In some embodiments, the polar solvent extraction can serve to remove at least a portion of the isomerization suppression agent. In some embodiments, the extracting comprises high shear mix-

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ing although such mixing, in some embodiments, may contribute to undesirable emulsion formation. In some embodiments, the extracting comprises low-intensity mixing (e.g., stirring that is not high shear). The present teachings are in no way restricted to any particular type or duration of mixing. However, for purposes of illustration, in some embodiments, the extracting comprises mixing the polar solvent and the mixture together for at least about 1 minute. In some embodiments, the mixture and the polar solvent are mixed together for at least about 2 minutes, in some embodiments for at least about 5 minutes, in some embodiments for at least about 10 minutes, in some embodiments for at least about 15 minutes, in some embodiments for at least about 20 minutes, in some embodiments for at least about 25 minutes, in some embodiments for at least about 30 minutes, in some embodiments for at least about 35 minutes, in some embodiments for at least about 40 minutes, in some embodiments for at least about 45 minutes, in some embodiments for at least about 50 minutes, in some embodiments for at least about 55 minutes, and in some embodiments for at least about 60 minutes.

The present teachings are in no way restricted to any particular amount of polar solvent added to the mixture for the extracting. However, for purposes of illustration, in some embodiments, the amount by weight of polar solvent (e.g., water) added to the mixture for the extracting is more than the weight of the mixture. In some embodiments, the amount by weight of polar solvent (e.g., water) added to the mixture for the extracting is less than the weight of the mixture. In some embodiments, the weight ratio of the mixture to the water added to the mixture is at least about 1:1, in some embodiments at least about 2:1, in some embodiments at least about 3:1, in some embodiments at least about 4:1, in some embodiments at least about 5:1, in some embodiments at least about 6:1, in some embodiments at least about 7:1, in some embodiments at least about 8:1, in some embodiments at least about 9:1, and in some embodiments at least about 10:1.

In some embodiments, methods for suppressing isomerization of an olefin metathesis product in accordance with the present teachings further comprise allowing a settling period following the polar solvent wash to promote phase separation. The present teachings are in no way restricted to any particular duration of settling period. However, for purposes of illustration, in some embodiments, the settling period is at least about 1 minute. In some embodiments, the settling period is at least about 2 minutes. In some embodiments, the settling period is at least about 5 minutes. In some embodiments, the settling period is at least about 10 minutes. In some embodiments, the settling period is at least about 15 minutes.

In some embodiments, as shown in FIG. 1, methods for suppressing isomerization of an olefin metathesis product in accordance with the present teachings further comprise separating an organic phase from an aqueous phase. In some embodiments, a majority of the isomerization suppression agent is distributed in the aqueous phase. In some embodiments, a majority of the olefin metathesis product is distributed in the organic phase. In some embodiments, a majority of the isomerization suppression agent is distributed in the aqueous phase and a majority of the olefin metathesis product is distributed in the organic phase.

In some embodiments, a method in accordance with the present teachings for suppressing isomerization of an olefin metathesis product produced in a metathesis reaction comprises (a) adding an isomerization suppression agent that comprises nitric acid to a mixture that comprises the olefin metathesis product and residual metathesis catalyst from the metathesis reaction under conditions sufficient to passivate at least a portion of the residual metathesis catalyst; (b) washing

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the mixture with a polar solvent; and (c) separating a phase that includes a majority of the isomerization suppression agent from a phase that includes a majority of the olefin metathesis product. In some embodiments, the residual metathesis catalyst comprises ruthenium. In some embodiments, the nitric acid is added in a molar excess relative to the residual metathesis catalyst. In some embodiments, the molar excess is less than or equal to about 50 to 1, in some embodiments less than or equal to about 40 to 1, in some embodiments less than or equal to about 30 to 1, in some embodiments less than or equal to about 20 to 1, in some embodiments less than or equal to about 10 to 1, in some embodiments less than or equal to about 8 to 1, and in some embodiments less than or equal to about 5 to 1.

In some embodiments—particularly though not exclusively those involving metathesis-based methods for refining natural oil feedstocks—methods for suppressing isomerization of an olefin metathesis product in accordance with the present teachings further comprise separating the olefin metathesis product into a metathesized triacylglyceride (m-TAG) fraction and an olefinic fraction, as shown in FIG. 1. A majority of the triacylglyceride fraction is comprised by molecules comprising one or more carbon-carbon double bonds and, optionally, one or more additional functional groups, whereas a majority of the olefinic fraction is comprised by molecules comprising one or more unsaturated carbon-carbon bonds and no additional functional groups.

In some embodiments—particularly though not exclusively those involving metathesis-based methods for refining natural oil feedstocks—methods for suppressing isomerization of an olefin metathesis product in accordance with the present teachings further comprise transesterifying the triacylglyceride fraction to produce one or a plurality of transesterification products, as shown in FIG. 1. In some embodiments, the transesterification products comprise fatty acid methyl esters (FAMES). In some embodiments—particularly though not exclusively those involving metathesis-based methods for refining natural oil feedstocks—methods for suppressing isomerization of an olefin metathesis product in accordance with the present teachings further comprise separating the transesterification products from a glycerol-containing phase, as shown in FIG. 1.

In some embodiments, methods for suppressing isomerization of an olefin metathesis product in accordance with the present teachings comprise extracting the mixture to which an isomerization suppression agent has been added with a polar solvent (e.g., water) and separating an organic phase from an aqueous phase as described above. In some embodiments, the residual metathesis catalyst in the mixture comprises ruthenium. In some embodiments, a majority of the ruthenium is carried into an organic phase and a minority of the ruthenium is distributed in an aqueous phase. In some embodiments, at least about 51% of the ruthenium is extracted into an organic phase. In some embodiments, at least about 60% of the ruthenium is extracted into an organic phase. In some embodiments, at least about 65% of the ruthenium is extracted into an organic phase. In some embodiments, at least about 70% of the ruthenium is extracted into an organic phase. In some embodiments, at least about 75% of the ruthenium is extracted into an organic phase. In some embodiments, at least about 80% of the ruthenium is extracted into an organic phase. In some embodiments, at least about 85% of the ruthenium is extracted into an organic phase. In some embodiments, at least about 90% of the ruthenium is extracted into an organic phase.

In some embodiments—particularly though not exclusively those involving metathesis-based methods for refining

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natural oil feedstocks—methods for suppressing isomerization of an olefin metathesis product in accordance with the present teachings further comprise separating the olefin metathesis product into a triacylglyceride fraction and an olefinic fraction, transesterifying the triacylglyceride fraction to produce one or a plurality of transesterification products (e.g., FAMES), and separating the transesterification products from a glycerol-containing phase, as shown in FIG. 1. In some embodiments, the residual metathesis catalyst in the mixture comprises ruthenium. In some embodiments, a majority of the ruthenium is distributed between the glycerol-containing phase and the less polar FAME phase.

In some embodiments, a method of refining a natural oil in accordance with the present teachings comprises: (a) providing a feedstock comprising a natural oil; (b) reacting the feedstock in the presence of a metathesis catalyst to form a metathesized product comprising an olefin and an ester; (c) passivating the metathesis catalyst with an agent that comprises nitric acid; (d) separating the olefin in the metathesized product from the ester in the metathesized product; and (e) transesterifying the ester in the presence of an alcohol to form a transesterified product and/or hydrogenating the olefin to form a fully or partially saturated hydrogenated product.

As noted above, the use of THMP as an isomerization suppressor—particularly on an industrial scale—is problematic in view of its commercial availability and pricing, the fact that a carcinogenic byproduct, formaldehyde, typically accompanies its preparation, and the potential that exists to generate explosive H_2 gas if conditions become too basic. In addition to these drawbacks, the present inventors have found that when THMP (as opposed to nitric acid) is used for the suppression of olefin isomerization—particularly when the amount of residual metathesis catalyst is low (e.g., in some embodiments less than about 1000 ppm, in some embodiments less than about 500 ppm, in some embodiments less than about 250 ppm, and in some embodiments less than about 100 ppm)—reclamation of transition metal from the residual metathesis catalyst can be complicated by the distribution of the transition metal (e.g., ruthenium) between multiple phases with no appreciable concentration or convergence of the transition metal into any one phase. By way of example, when THMP is used as an isomerization suppression agent in a metathesis-based method for refining a natural oil feedstock, such as described above, it is found that ruthenium is broadly distributed between a water wash stream on the one hand and a glycerol-containing phase and transesterification products on the other. In some studies, about 50% of the total ruthenium was carried into a water wash stream with the remaining Ru being distributed between a glycerol-containing phase and the transesterification products. While neither desiring to be bound by any particular theory nor intending to limit in any measure the scope of the appended claims or their equivalents, it is presently observed that the difficulty in concentrating a majority of the transition metal into a particular stream when THMP is used as the isomerization suppression agent arises primarily when the amount of ruthenium to be recovered is small (e.g., about 1 wt % or less). By contrast, when a large amount of ruthenium is involved (e.g., about 1 wt % or more) and THMP is used as the isomerization suppression agent, a majority of the ruthenium can successfully be concentrated into an aqueous phase and removed.

In some embodiments, for purposes of simplifying the metal reclamation process, it would be desirable if the metal to be reclaimed (e.g., in some embodiments, ruthenium) were concentrated primarily in one phase and, in some embodiments, if that phase were located downstream in the overall process. Thus, in some embodiments—particularly though

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not exclusively those involving metathesis-based methods for refining natural oil feedstocks—methods for suppressing isomerization of an olefin metathesis product in accordance with the present teachings provide a further advantage with respect to the use of THMP inasmuch as a majority of the ruthenium to be reclaimed can be carried into an organic phase (e.g., a glycerol-containing phase and/or the transesterification products phase) and a minority of the ruthenium can be carried into an aqueous phase (e.g., water wash stream).

As shown by the data in Table 1 below, nitric acid gives variable levels of isomerization suppression depending on treatment conditions, with degrees of isomerization ranging, in some embodiments, from about 0.5% to about 3%. As such, nitric acid is an effective isomerization suppression agent for preserving product quality. As further shown by the data in Table 1, the testing of other acids (e.g., acetic, sulfuric) under similar conditions yielded either no suppression or suppression that was inferior to that of nitric acid. However, it was found that phosphoric acid (H_3PO_4) under these conditions also provided isomerization suppression but to a lesser extent than nitric acid. In some embodiments, an isomerization suppression agent in accordance with the present teachings comprises phosphoric acid.

The following examples and representative procedures illustrate features in accordance with the present teachings, and are provided solely by way of illustration. They are not intended to limit the scope of the appended claims or their equivalents.

EXAMPLES

Materials and Methods

Unless otherwise indicated, all chemicals were used as received and without drying. Palm oil was obtained from Wilmar International Limited. Kirkland soybean oil was purchased from retail sources. 1-Octene was purchased from Sigma Aldrich. C827 ruthenium catalyst was obtained from Materia, Inc. Nitric acid was obtained from Aldrich (ACS reagent, 70 wt % in water, lot no. MKBD1155). Silica gel was Davisil Grade 633 (W. R. Grace & Co. supplied through Sigma Aldrich, pore size 60 Å, 200-425 mesh, batch no. 04720TD). Magnesol Polysorb 30/40 was supplied by Dallas Corporation (SRR 000-60-4).

Unless otherwise specified, all isomerization results were derived from a small scale isomerization (SSI) unit as described below. By way of illustration, taking the amount of terminal-to-internal migration as a representative and non-limiting example, the degree of isomerization can be calculated by first obtaining the quotient of (i) the amount of internal isomers as represented, for example, by the areas under gas chromatography (GC) peaks corresponding to these internal isomers to (ii) the total amount of all isomers—both terminal and internal—as represented, for example, by the areas under the GC peaks corresponding to these isomers, and then multiplying this quotient by 100. Analogous calculations can be performed to determine the amount of internal-to-terminal migration and/or the amount of internal-to-internal migrations. Table 1 below summarizes isomerization suppression results from various mineral acids.

Example 1

Small Scale Isomerization (SSI) Studies

Metathesized samples were heated to 250° C. for one hour under nitrogen after suppression treatment. Duplicates runs

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were conducted on both the sample to be tested as well as a control sample which had not been treated. Degree of isomerization was determined by taking the total of isomers of methyl 9-decenoate divided by the total amount of methyl decenoate multiplied by 100.

The small scale isomerization unit includes a cylindrical aluminum block having several holes (e.g., six to eight) drilled therein. The aluminum block is placed on a hot plate and heated to the requisite temperature. Small amounts (typically several grams) of metathesis product are placed in glass tubes, which are then fitted with plastic heads providing an opening for a slight positive pressure of nitrogen to be present above the mixture. After purging the samples for 30 minutes under nitrogen, the mixtures are heated to 250° C. (with or without stirring) for one hour by placing the glass tubes in the opening of the aluminum block. The resulting triacylglycerides (TAGs) are then transesterified with methanol and base and the resulting FAMES are analyzed by GC. In some embodiments, methyl 9-decenoate is measured vis-à-vis the amount of its internal isomers (if any).

Example 2

Preparation of a Cross-Metathesized Olefin Product

Octenylized palm oil was prepared as follows. At a 3:1 molar ratio (olefin-to-olefin basis), 1-octene (33.33 g) was added to palm oil (50 g) having a peroxide value less than 2. As used herein, the mole ratio of cross agent (e.g., 1-octene) to oil relates to the molar ratio of double bond content. In the oil, the double bond content is calculated from the relative ratio of the key fatty acids present (each with its own olefin content), all of which can be readily determined by gas chromatography after transesterification. Thus, in this example, a 3:1 mole ratio refers to having a 3:1 ratio of cross agent double bonds to the total double bonds of the oil. The resultant material was heated with stirring to 60° C. with nitrogen sparging for 30-45 minutes. Once oxygen was removed, the nitrogen line was pulled up providing headspace only with the addition of C827 catalyst (2.75 mg, an approximate 55 ppm loading). The reaction was run for two hours with periodic sampling of the oil to determine the extent of conversion of the reaction.

Example 3

Nitric Acid as Isomerization Suppression Agent

A cross-metathesized palm oil (25 grams, 3:1 octenolysis) was heated to 80° C. under a N₂ atmosphere. At temperature, a 50-fold molar excess (relative to catalyst) of nitric acid (1M solution in water) was added. This 50-fold molar excess relates to the amount of suppression agent added compared directly to the amount (moles) of catalyst present. The mixture was heated with stirring at 80° C. for one hour. It was observed that the already somewhat yellow solution turned a darker yellow color after several minutes but that no further color change occurred over the rest of the experiment. A sample was taken for small scale isomerization (SSI) testing after 30 minutes in order to stress the reactants and evaluate the degree of isomerization. Typically, the SSI conditions involved heating the reactants at 250° C. for one hour under nitrogen. The remainder of the sample was then extracted/washed with water (5 mL) for 15 minutes at reaction temperature. A second sample was then taken after this treatment for SSI testing.

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Results from isomerization testing showed that similar runs of unsuppressed metathesized product gave degree of isomerization levels greater than about 40%. Singular runs of the nitric acid treated materials gave typical degree of isomerization levels of 1-3% either with or without water washing.

Example 4

Nitric Acid as Isomerization Suppression Agent

Repeating the experiment described in Example 3 above but using an 8-fold molar excess of nitric acid showed that similar suppression results occurred even at the lower concentration of nitric acid. An octenylized Palm oil (25 grams) was heated to 90° C. under nitrogen. At temperature, 10 microliters of 1M HNO₃ was added. After 30 minutes, a sample of the reaction mixture was taken for SSI testing. Subsequently, the remainder of the material was washed with water (heating at temperature for 15 minutes). The resulting isomerization levels of the non-washed and washed samples were measured at 2.3%/12.9% and 2.4%/12.8% respectively (duplicate runs in each case). Under these conditions, the degree of isomerization of non-suppressed material was 30.8%.

Example 5

Nitric Acid as Isomerization Suppression Agent

The following experiment was performed to determine whether a separate pretreatment step is required when using nitric acid suppression. A cross metathesized palm (20.8 grams) was heated to 90° C. under nitrogen. To this was added 4 mL of a 0.15 wt % nitric acid solution and the mixture was stirred for 30 minutes. After the layers were separated, the upper organic layer was taken for SSI testing. The remaining upper layer was then water washed (this subsequent water wash layer had a pH of 3). The washed organic layer was then subjected to SSI testing. The first separated material had isomerization levels of 1.8%/0.9% while the material from the wash had isomerization levels of 2.0%/2.5%. The control (unsuppressed) ran at a level of 41.5% isomerization.

As shown by data in Table 1, observed degrees of isomerization were rather similar whether or not a water wash was performed. Thus, the decision to use water extraction may be reflect the desirability (or undesirability) of carrying forward the acid in a subsequent processing step as opposed to removing the acid first.

Example 6

Removal of Acid Via Adsorption

A cross-metathesized palm oil (25 grams, made using C827 catalyst) was treated with 1 M nitric acid (20 microliters). After 5 minutes of stirring, Magnesol Polysorb 30/40 (29 mg, a magnesium silicate) was added and the mixture stirred for 30 minutes. Filtration of the material and subsequent water washing gave an aqueous layer with a pH of 7. This is in contrast to normal washing of nitric-treated material in which the aqueous layer typically has a pH of 1. While neither desiring to be bound by any particular theory nor intending to limit in any measure the scope of the appended claims or their equivalents, it is presently believed that the observed pH is indicative of strong adsorption of the nitric acid onto the added adsorbent. Isomerization levels in this

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experiment were all at an average of less than 2% (whereas the non-suppressed control was isomerized to the extent of 52.7%).

Example 7

Solid-Support of Isomerization Suppression Agent

Water (15 mL) was added to Magnesol Polysorb 30/40 (5 g) in a 100-mL round-bottomed flask to produce a slurry. Next, nitric acid (70 wt %, 3 g) was added. The resultant slurry was heated and concentrated under reduced pressure on a rotary evaporator to provide a powdery white solid (5.7 g).

To 20 grams of a cross-metathesized palm oil was added 17 mg (approximately 0.085 wt %) of the nitric acid/Magnesol solid prepared above. The mixture was heated to 80° C. and stirred for one hour. Samples for filtration were taken after 15 and 60 minutes. After filtration, the resultant oil was tested in SSI. The unsuppressed oil had isomerization levels of 35.3% and 33.9% (duplicate runs). By contrast, the nitric acid/Magnesol treated oil had isomerization levels of 0.7% and 0.6% (after 15 min; duplicate runs) and 1.1% and 1.3% (60 minutes; duplicate runs).

While neither desiring to be bound by any particular theory nor intending to limit in any measure the scope of the appended claims or their equivalents, it is presently believed that nitric acid is not only an effective isomerization suppressant agent in these reactions but that it may also be enhanced in its activity by employing shorter reaction times and/or by supporting the nitric acid on a solid support.

Example 8

Solid-Support of Isomerization Suppression Agent

In some embodiments, the nitric acid is attached to Magnesol Polysorb 30/40 as described in Example 7 above. However, in other embodiments, alternative solid supports are used.

By way of example, similar results and benefits were observed by using silica gel as a solid support for nitric acid, which resulted in lower temperatures (e.g., about 60° C.) and shorter reaction times (e.g., between about 3 and about 5 minutes) albeit with somewhat higher levels of isomerization (e.g., about 2.0%).

Distilled water (20 grams) was added to Davison silica gel (5 grams). The silica gel was thoroughly wetted by mixing. To this mixture was then added concentrated nitric acid (70 wt %, 1 gram, approximately 12 wt % nitric acid on silica assuming all of the acid remained on the solid). The material was put into a 250-mL round-bottomed flask and placed on a rotary evaporator at approximately 70° C. After 30 minutes of heating under vacuum, a free-flowing white solid remained. To 30 grams of a cross-metathesized palm oil under nitrogen at 60° C. was added 30 mg (0.1 wt %) of the modified silica described above. The solution immediately became a somewhat darker shade of yellow (typical of nitric acid-treated cross-metathesized oils).

Removing a sample of the mixture at 3-5 minutes and filtering gave a product which only isomerized to a level of 1.7% in the SSI. A similar isomerization value (1.6 wt %) was observed after waiting 20 minutes and taking a sample for filtration. It was observed that when using silica by itself as a potential suppressant, increased levels of isomerization can actually occur (36.4% isomerization versus a control of 21.9%). While neither desiring to be bound by any particular theory nor intending to limit in any measure the scope of the

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appended claims or their equivalents, it is presently believed that this is indicative of the nitric acid being the active component for suppression in the nitric on silica experiment. Moreover, while neither desiring to be bound by any particular theory nor intending to limit in any measure the scope of the appended claims or their equivalents, it is presently believed that the nitric does not come off of the silica gel during processing.

Example 9

Phosphoric Acid as Isomerization Suppression Agent

To 30 grams of a cross-metathesized octenylized palm oil was added a phosphoric acid solution (1 M, 60 microliters). The sample was heated under N₂ for one hour at 90° C. The sample was then washed with water (typically at a 5:1 oil-to-water ratio). The resulting organic layer (washed material) was then placed into the SSI and run for one hour at 250° C. under nitrogen. Subsequent analysis showed an isomerization level of 2.5%. The non-suppressed cross-metathesis material isomerized to a level of 23.9%. Thus, as evidenced by this example, phosphoric acid can actually suppress isomerization under certain conditions.

TABLE 1

ISOMERIZATION SUPPRESSION RESULTS OF MINERAL ACIDS				
Acid	Molar Excess over Catalyst	Isom. (duplicates)	Isom. (Control - avg. of duplicates)	Comments
Nitric	50	2.2	30.8	With water washing (0.9 w/o washing)
Nitric	8	2.4, 2.8	30.8	With water washing (similar to no water)
Nitric	Extraction with 0.15% HNO ₃	1.8, 0.9	41.5	Water washing only
Nitric	50	1.4, 1.3	16	Water wash and no wash are the same. Magnesol treatment drops this to 0.9% isom
Nitric	Excess; 5 min at 80° C.	1.3, 1.6	31.4	Nitric adsorbed onto Magnesol
Acetic Acid	Excess - direct addition (no water wash)	36.7, 40.2	32.3	Higher degree of isomerization than control
Sulfuric	25 (with water extraction)	48.6, 41.3	29.2	Higher degree of isomerization than control
Phosphoric	50	2.5	23.9	

The entire contents of each of U.S. Pat. No. 6,215,019 B1 and United States Patent Application Publication No. 2011/0113679 A1 cited above are hereby incorporated by reference, except that in the event of any inconsistent disclosure or definition from the present specification, the disclosure or definition herein shall be deemed to prevail.

The foregoing detailed description and accompanying drawing have been provided by way of explanation and illustration, and are not intended to limit the scope of the appended claims. Many variations in the presently preferred embodiments illustrated herein will be apparent to one of ordinary skill in the art, and remain within the scope of the appended claims and their equivalents.

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It is to be understood that the elements and features recited in the appended claims may be combined in different ways to produce new claims that likewise fall within the scope of the present invention. Thus, whereas the dependent claims appended below may depend from only a single independent or dependent claim, it is to be understood that these dependent claims can, alternatively, be made to depend in the alternative from any preceding claim—whether independent or dependent—and that such new combinations are to be understood as forming a part of the present specification.

The invention claimed is:

1. A method for suppressing isomerization of an olefin metathesis product, the method comprising:

providing a mixture comprising an olefin metathesis product and residual metathesis catalyst; and

adding an isomerization suppression agent to the mixture to passivate at least a portion of the residual metathesis catalyst;

wherein the isomerization suppression agent comprises nitric acid.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the olefin metathesis product is a compound comprising an internal carbon-carbon double bond.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the olefin metathesis product is a compound comprising a carboxylic ester moiety or a derivative thereof.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the olefin metathesis product is selected from the group consisting of 9-decenoic acid, an ester of 9-decenoic acid, 9-undecenoic acid, an ester of 9-undecenoic acid, 9-dodecenoic acid, an ester of 9-dodecenoic acid, 1-decene, 2-dodecene, 3-dodecene, and any combinations thereof.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein the olefin metathesis product is derived from the metathesis of a natural oil.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein the olefin metathesis product is derived from the cross-metathesis of a natural oil with a low molecular weight olefin.

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7. The method of claim 1, wherein the residual metathesis catalyst is a compound comprising a transition metal selected from the group consisting of ruthenium, rhenium, tantalum, nickel, tungsten, molybdenum, and any combinations thereof.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein the residual metathesis catalyst is a compound comprising ruthenium.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein the nitric acid is selected from the group consisting of anhydrous nitric acid, fuming nitric acid, concentrated nitric acid, solid hydrates of nitric acid, solutions of nitric acid, and any combinations thereof.

10. The method of claim 1, further comprising, after adding the isomerization suppression agent, washing the mixture with a polar solvent.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein the polar solvent is selected from the group consisting of water, methanol, ethanol, ethylene glycol, glycerol, DMF, polyethylene glycols, glymes, and any combinations thereof.

12. The method of claim 10, wherein the polar solvent comprises water.

13. The method of claim 1, wherein the isomerization suppression agent is attached to a solid support.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein the solid support is selected from the group consisting of carbon, silica, silica-alumina, alumina, clay, magnesium silicates, diatomaceous earth, and any combinations thereof.

15. The method of claim 3, further comprising, after adding the isomerization suppression agent, washing the mixture with a polar solvent.

16. The method of claim 4, further comprising, after adding the isomerization suppression agent, washing the mixture with a polar solvent.

17. The method of claim 9, further comprising, after adding the isomerization suppression agent, washing the mixture with a polar solvent.

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